



Combined Home School Association & School Advisory Board

Open Policy Meeting

8:00am March 22, 2017

Present: Principal Peggy Durney, Members of the School Advisory Board, Members of the Home and School Association, parents of currently enrolled students.

Phil Droege, SAB President, opened the meeting at 8:12am after Mrs. Durney led the school in morning prayers & announcements.

Phil gave an overview of the role and mission of the SAB. The SAB currently has ten members; most (not by requirement) are parents of school children. There are three elected positions within the Board; President, VP & Secretary. The SAB serves as an intermediary between the School Community and the Administration, and in an advisory capacity to assist the Principal, such as evaluating and recommending the new Drop-Off policy last year. The members of the SAB serve on a rotating basis, so the Board doesn't ever completely turn over at any one time.

Maureen then gave an overview of the HSA which primarily fundraises and builds community. Note: we have a dinner at Mama Lucia's coming up on March 30th. They have tried to offer more Spirit Wear this year and had successful sales. Look in the eBulletin for info on some surplus items still available. We had a great turnout for the Family Bingo last month with a number of new families participating, and we are looking at another baseball outing to see the DC Padres on April 30th. Currently the Executive Board has four seats: the President, VP, Secretary & Treasurer, rolling over every two years on a rotating basis. They are looking at keeping the President on for a

third year as a consultant and extending the Treasurer or Secretary for an additional year. They anticipate voting on that at the upcoming May meeting. They are looking at ways to formalize the process of event chairing and ways to streamline communications when publicizing events in the bulletin.

Reminder: you can earn half or full credit toward your family fundraising obligation by chairing a fundraising event that raises enough money to meet benchmarks! They are working on updating New Family Welcome Packets.

Phil shared a little history of the combined SAB/HSA meeting, such as that at last year we introduced and eventually instituted the Family Referral Program, which grants a \$500 credit toward any family who refers a new family to enroll new students – this year we have had four families benefit from this. Another change growing out of earlier meetings was adapting to conform SJE's policy to Montgomery County's policy to have a two-hour delay policy.

Mrs. Durney shared that the upcoming school year will begin on September 5th. She is awaiting approval from ADW on the school calendar she submitted to them a couple of weeks ago so that a preliminary schedule may be shared with school families.

New tuition for the upcoming year will be released by mid-April. We don't anticipate it going up significantly. She reminded parents that ADW's pay scale hasn't changed in three years, so faculty simply move up a step each year by 1.9%. We used to budget 15% for benefits; this year we will be budgeting 18%. ADW has returned financial assistance awards last week.

We are getting closer to rolling out a new school website this summer that will be very helpful. The new site will include more information, be easier to update, and provide alumni news and a link for online giving.

ADW has been having some issues with the online grades and reporting system; so rather than roll it out this spring, like we had hoped to do, we will wait for the fall semester.

Our Scantron reports were above national averages in both reading and math. While the scores are very high, one area we need to work on is in long passage reading. Faculty is looking at ways to incorporate additional reading time to work on that. Mrs. Durney is also taking a deeper look at ways to provide math enrichment. In an effort to have the maximum benefit of any enrichment, faculty is taking a greater in-depth look at possibilities of how to best work out the logistics.

Textbooks are being reviewed. We don't yet have the figure of money we will receive via the State of MD Textbook Program (which may be used for hardware & software as well as books), but our Reading & Math books are currently up to date; Science and Social Studies books may be replaced. Mrs. Gutierrez has been meeting with ADW Science Teachers and they have been debating the merits of moving toward a more holistic science program that addresses multiple specialties within each school year, rather than a year of earth science followed by a year of chemistry, and so on.

Regarding software, we used IXL for the first time for Summer Math last year. We have purchased licensing for 2nd through 8th grades for math and language arts, with a pilot program with science and social studies in 4th & 5th grade, which we hope the company will expand to other grades. We are also utilizing Brain Pop, particularly in the primary wing. We use the Discovery Channel resources and Scholastic resources, both electronic and handouts (such as the Election resources from the fall).

Mrs. Durney shared that Fr. Calis has asked us to formally and informally remind parents that there is no alcohol to be served or sold at any event at which children are present. This includes in the kitchen when children are present in the auditorium. Compliance in this area is not only to set a good example for the children, but is required by our insurance.

We are always looking at ways to improve lunch duty and ways of bringing the school community together for lunch despite lacking a cafeteria.

A parent wanted to thank Mrs. Durney for changing the PE schedule, allowing the kids to use the gym more for indoor recess this year.

A question was raised about the Mentor Family program, and if families that join during the middle of the year are told about the program. We need to redesign the e-bulletin to encourage people to read it through, and to ensure all families are receiving it. A discussion ensued about the merits of automatically assigning a family. It was also discussed that there is a desire to reinstitute the Moms Night Out for new families in the Pre-K/K program and other ways to share information on school events and things they might not know, for example, about NUT cards or Catholic Schools Week. There was general agreement that all parties need to remember to utilize the Room Parents more to share information.

Mrs. Durney addressed discipline matters and how she addresses them and works to differentiate between a real problem vs. normal, age-appropriate behavior (while noting she addresses both). As stated in the handbook, when an incident arises, the first step is for the teacher to talk with the student, followed, if necessary, by a conference with the principal. If still not resolved, the next step would be a discipline notice to parent, then demerit slip, and finally detention. She asked for trust in her ability and willingness to work compassionately with children in disciplining them, as opposed to punishing them. She reminded parents that we take bullying very seriously at SJE, but that there is a difference between a one-time issue and sustained behavior. Physical fighting will typically result in immediate suspension, but within reason – such as a second grader shoving another, which might be part of normal development. Questions she asks include: was there endangerment? what was the severity? When merited, Mrs. Durney will involve the school's social worker. Mrs. Durney is striving for consistency and encouraging the kids and is always working with ADW and attending workshops on how to address issues.

A parent asked about guidelines for parents during lunch duty. How do we discipline in a productive way, and how can we effectively communicate while allowing them to 'get the wiggles out'. Faculty is actually working currently on putting together grade-specific appropriate behavior and rules that will help parents. Mrs. Durney said she wants to do whatever we can do to provide consistency. Her philosophy is that kids are kids...she doesn't want to

quash their spirit – it is normal for kids to have feelings; it is the behavior that they need help in learning – we have to provide balance.

A parent expressed appreciation for the careful filtering and consideration given regarding discipline – that there is a difference between guidelines and rules and while we need consistency, things shouldn't always be rigid; circumstances are always unique and not black & white. Mrs. Durney shared that while we do have and use discipline slips, she makes a point to tell a child that their first slip of the year 'goes in her drawer'; but if the child receives a second, then both slips will be entered sent home.

A parent thanked Mrs. Durney for allowing the middle school girls to request a change to the PE uniform, allowing them to elect to wear their skirt over their PE uniform if they like. She made the change in response to the girls following the policy while appropriately approaching her with their request.

Mrs. Durney thanked Fr. Cusick for teaching the seventh graders and working with all of the children.

Mrs. Durney shared that we are looking at ways of fostering communication between families and Sisters who have moved up to Scranton after having been here.

Enrollment for next year is higher than normal at this point – we are about 180 so far and have six new families registered for next year.

Mrs. Durney thanked everyone for coming and reminded all that her door is always open. She is looking at ways to encourage more input from families and the possibility of having more frequent 'Coffee with the Principal' events next year that may each be tailored to a specific grade or wing, or to a particular subject matter. Melissa Sloan suggested that one way to make it easier for parents to attend might be to have the 'Coffee with the Principal' events on First Fridays. We could also invite the parents of a specific grade the same morning that the grade leads the school Mass. That way, if parents have made arrangements to take time off of work to attend the First Friday Mass, they wouldn't need to on another morning to attend a 'Coffee with the Principal'.